

GESTURES IN THE BIBLE

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this essay is to obtain a rough idea of the figures of speech which name the parts of the body in English writing. As we know, there are many phrases in English which use the parts of the body as their elements. For instance, we have such as: (Pocket Oxford Dictionary)

as plain as the nose on your face	= easily seen.
count or tell noses	= count supporters and, decide by mere numbers.
poke or thrust one's nose into	= pry or intrude.
follow one's nose	= go straight forward.
turn up one's nose at	= show disdain for.
cut off one's nose to	= spite.
put one's nose out of joint	= supplant or disconcert.
bite or snap one's nose off	= answer him anappishly.
pay through one's nose	= pay exorbitantly.
speak through one's nose	= pronounce nasally.
under one's nose	= straight before one.
have a good nose for	= have a sense of smell esp. of dog, &, fig. of detective.
lead by the nose	= (self-evident).

A glance at these phrases shows us that some of them tell us directly what they mean, while others are in figurative use. And those with self-evident connotations are sure to be used in a figurative sense, too. In short, there is a limitless possibility of their variation, so that it would be almost impossible to make a complete and exhaustive list of them. Knowing this, we can't but try and further the study of these idioms. It is because they are so appealing to the fundamental psychology of human mind that their intimacy with our daily life will easily tend to arouse an empathy in our mind. They don't irritate or bewilder the reader, although they are at the expense of a personal distinguishing uniqueness of style, i.e. an expression of a writer's original personality.

Of course, some writers who are especially fond of colloquial tone seem to favor these idioms. To give a few examples in 'Books and You' by W. S. Maugham, we can find such as follows:

1. I have read George Eliot's Adam Bede, but I cannot put my hand on my heart and say that it was with pleasure.
2. Half a dozen good detective stories and a hot-water bottle will enable anyone to snap his fingers at the worst cold in the head.
3. Besides these, I keep on hand a volume of poetry in case I feel in the mood for that.
4. He (Defoe) had a keen eye for the curious incident and the telling detail.
5. It warms the cockles of your heart.
6. This is not a writer to be despised who had such a quick eye for an amusing incident.
7. After all it is Don Quixote himself you want -- Don Quixote with his faithful Sancho Panza; he is tender, loyal and great-hearted.
8. When its certainty is impossible it is sensible to keep an open mind.
9. Authors then will be glad to learn from Hawthorne how to manage a sentence of more than half a dozen words, . . . and how without pedantry to please both the eye and the ear.
10. I have by the way said something of their authors; and I am conscious that it must seem rather absurd for me, as though I were a candidate for office trying to get on good terms with voters, to give Jane Austen a chuck under the chin, as it were, a pat on the head to Goethe and a friendly nod to Dostoevsky.
11. Christopher Newman wishes to marry Madame de Cintre because he wants a mother for his children and she will grace the head of his table.
12. There is a throb, a mystery, a foreboding, a passion, a sense of the horror and terror of life, of the inevitableness of destiny and of the power of evil, which take you by the throat.
13. And if you are a writer you are proud to think that you cultivate an art which is capable of such altitudes and which can work such wonderful effects on the hearts and senses and minds of men.
14. This book stands head and shoulders above the rest of his work. (Emily Dickenson)
15. It is in itself a limiting form and she narrows it still more because her ear was not subtle and her language was seldom simple enough for the measure.
16. He wrote his poems partly in the rhythmic language of the Bible, partly . . . and partly in an uncouth pedestrian prose which offends the ear.

He uses this kind of idiom very effectively. But to our delight, this primitive and naive way of expression is not only the possession of so-called writers but also ours. Everybody in the course of a

normal life will learn to use them to some effect. It is needless to say that from these phrases we can't expect the styles which suggest a high individuality or inventiveness, while, combined with personality, they will do much to produce an individual prose style. Moreover, we often hear such words and phrases in daily conversation:

- (1) Adjective : handy, nosey, cheeky.
- (2) Noun : footing, heading.
- (3) Phrase : have not heart, lose one's face, make eyes.

In connection with those under (1) Adjective, we may add that in parasynthetic hyphenated compounds the parts of the body are frequent elements : (Cf. "Stylistic study of the 'Apple-Tree'" by the present writer, p. 135, Memoirs of the Ehime Univ. Vol. I. No. 1.) They are:

-eyed	-legged	-haired	-footed
-bearded	-cheeked	-hearted	-faced
-necked	-backed	-lashed	

Taking another point of view, that is, the etymological one, we know there are some words in English the origin of which can be traced back to the simple motion:

surprise	= to take hold of, to seize.
resist	= to stand back.
produce	= to bring forward.
choose	= to taste.

From these considerations mentioned above, I consider it worth while to make a little study of these everyday-phrases in which the parts of the body are employed, in the hope that the approach to the English idiom by this way will do something to give light on the speech psychology of the English language as well as the universal meaning of gestures.

MATERIAL:

It goes without saying that the phrases under consideration, which have some part of the body as a component, have been the common property of people since the very beginning of human

speech. As they are so deeply rooted in our mind and heart, it would be almost impossible to go back to the very origin of their birth, even if we admit that the human mind, after thousands of years of civilization, still has not made any progress or change in its emotional aspects. Such being the case, we shall go back as far as the Authorized Version of the English Bible for their comparatively older forms. This is of course for convenience sake, which, I must confess, admits a lot of argument. This deficiency, I hope, can be covered by the fact that the Bible is, and has been, a reading which fused itself into the mind of common people, contributing something to their vocabulary.

Besides confining the data to the English Bible, we have decided to pick up only a few parts of the body from the whole, i.e. eye, ear, hand, head, mouth, nose and face. The eye is an organ of seeing and observation, the ear an organ of hearing, the hand an organ of manipulation, the head an organ of thinking and understanding, the mouth an organ of self-expression as well as communication and the nose an organ which often discloses one's inner attitude of disdain toward another. And concurrently these are supposed to express our mental condition and the state of our emotions respectively, as these features are usually very active and make motion or action or response to the action of others. Our chief concern in this study is to be directed towards the gestures made by these features, especially to the figurative meaning 'beneath or beyond or alongside' them.

In some cases the phrases consisting of the features are nothing but verbal expression of an action. These cases are, however, exceptions and almost always they are accompanied by hidden implication besides their surface meaning. So native is this phenomenon to language that we might say 'the highest use of language cannot be made without incorporating some such quality of gesture within it.' 'Gesture, in language, is the outward and dramatic play of inward and imaged meaning. It is that play of meaningfulness among words which cannot be defined by the formula in the

dictionary, but which is defined in their use together; gesture is that meaningfulness which is moving, in every sense of that word: what moves the words and what moves us.' ('Language as gesture' by R.P. Blackmur, p. 6.)

Before we go to the specific analysis of the 'purposive, conventional control of the body's movements that produces meaningful gesture (ibid),' another limitation to the material should be mentioned here. As we know, there are some sort of words which signify a kind of gesture without indicating the part of the body by which we gesticulate. They are as follows:

<u>Word</u>	<u>Part of the body implied</u>
tremble, embrace, write	hand, arm
gape, kiss, eat; speak, whisper	mouth
walk, run	foot, leg
hear	ear
abreast	breast

These are exempted from the present consideration.

Lastly before we go to the individual analysis of the phrases, let's sum up in a few words the outline of the intention of this little study: 'Gesture is such a fundamental factor in communication that we shall check up the phrases belonging to this category of gesture in the Bible. It is expected that the Bible, being familiar to English-speaking people, would show us the minimum amount of the idioms in question.'

ANALYSIS

Let's start with the formal analysis of the gestures in the New Testament. Here we shall make it the first thing to see how many instances there are and what kind of collocation is most frequent in it. And then, if possible, their appealing power to our appreciation will be discussed, compared with those which are listed in the dictionaries of phrase and idiom. This will be very instructive, especially for us Japanese, for a certain gesture usually brings about the same thought or idea, no matter how the race may differ. But sometimes it happens that the mental associations or hidden meanings accompanied by gesture do not necessarily seem to be

exactly the same with those of English-speaking peoples. To give an example, we sometimes 'shrug our shoulders', signifying nothing more than 'mere' movement, while it seems to mean more than that to the Europeans, that is, to express dislike, disdain, indifference, or the like. Gesture varies with the race in its minute connotation.

1. EYE

In the New Testament there are about 90 instances of the phrase in which the word 'eye' is employed. But as a matter of fact, we cannot indicate any movement or action by the eye alone, so that most of the phrases can be regarded as expressing a sort of gesture in a broad sense of the word. To say it the other way round, the eye is used as a symbol of understanding or judgment. Among these phrases the most familiar are as follows:

thou beholdest the mote in thy brother's eye and not the beam in thine own eye.
(Mat. 7:3)

it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for tooth
(Mat. 5:38)

It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.
(Mark. 10:25)

The moment we hear them mentioned, they remind us of something of the Bible or the religious. To quote the other expressions peculiar to the Bible:

if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out.
(Mat. 5:29)

The light of the body is the eye.
(Mat. 6:22)

if therefore thine eye be single (=generous: Moffatt's translation), thy whole body shall full of light.
(Mat. 6:23)

It is not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?
Is thine eye evil, because I am good?
(Mat. 20:15)

it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.
(Mat. 18:9)

And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body ;
(1 Cor. 12:15

were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.

(Rev. 4:6

blessed are your eyes, for they see

(Mat. 13:16

But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.

(=they were prevented from recognizing him: Moffatt's translation) (Luke. 24:16

he anointed the eyes of the blind man

(John. 9:6

in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

(Rev. 5:6

For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers ; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.

(1 Peter. 3:12

Then touched he their eyes, saying

(Mat. 9:29

and when he had spit on his eyes

(Mark. 8:23

and his eyes were as a flame of fire

(Rev. 1:14

Some of these seem to sound even proverbial. But what about the others -- those which have nothing of the religious but much of the worldly and secular? In the New Testament, strange to say, the variety of the phrases is comparatively poor, in spite of their great quantity.

Taking the structural point of view, the most frequent collocation using the word 'eye' is made of the word 'open.'

a) open

their eyes were opened.

(Mat. 9:30

all things are naked and open to the eye of him

(Heb. 4:13

b) close

their eyes they have closed

(Mat. 13:15, Acts. 28:27

Combined with the word 'close', there are only two instances in

the New Testament.

c) see

blessed are your eyes, for they see

(Mat. 13:16)

Every eye shall see him

(Rev. 1:7)

This collocation is comparatively many in number, though it usually doesn't carry any particular figurative meaning.

d) lift up

And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.

(Mat. 17:8)

e) fasten, set

when I had fastened mine eyes,

(Acts. 11:6)

the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him,

(Acts. 13:9)

f) other collocations

their eyes received sight

(Mat. 20:34)

their eyes were heavy

(Mat. 26:43)

but now they are hid from thine eyes

(Luke. 19:42)

He hath blinded their eyes

(John. 12:42)

Let their eyes be darkened

(Romans. 11:10)

The eyes of your understanding being enlightened;

(Ephesians. 1:18)

wipe away all tears from their eyes

(Rev. 7:17)

Having eyes full of adultery

(2 Peter. 2:14)

g) prepositional phrases

and it is marvellous in our eyes

(Mat. 21:42)

There is no fear of God before their eyes

(Romans. 3:18)

in the twinkling of an eye

(1 Cor. 15:52)

Going over the above quotations, we notice the first thing that there are quite few which can be called as any special stylistic devices. Although some are half-way between a figurative and a literary use, they are generally so simple and plain. The ordinary dictionary in current use gives such expressions as:

to have in one's mind's eye
 to have a sure eye
 to be up to the eyes in
 to be dressed up to the eyes
 to make eyes at
 to keep a watchful eye
 to give an eye to
 to see with half an eye
 to see eye to eye
 in the eye of the (law, logic)
 an eye-opener
 an eye-opening (experience).

These have no place in the New Testament.

2. EAR

As for the 'ear', we can find 47 instances. Following the same way we applied to the phrases of the 'eye', let us quote the phrases which seem to be peculiar to the Bible.

And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest, and smote off his ear.
 (in allusion to the loss of ears as a punishment)
 (Mat. 26:51)

he touched his ear, and healed him.
 (Luke. 22:51)

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches ;
 (Rev. 2:7)

and uncircumcised in heart and ears
 (Acts. 7:51)

And he began to say unto them, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.
 (Luke. 4:21)

So much for the phrases with the religious association, while those with no special reference to the Bible are rich in variety but poor in quantity.

what you hear in the ear
 (Mat. 10:27)

which you have spoken in the ear
(Luke. 12:3

and their ears are dull of hearing
(Mat. 13:15

hear with your ears
(Mat. 13:15

put his fingers into his ears
(Mark. 7:33

his ears were opened
(Mark. 7:35

thy salutation sounded in mine ears
(Luke. 1:44

sayings sink down into your ears
(Luke. 9:44

and stopped their ears
(Acts. 7:51

came unto the ears of the church
(Acts. 11:22

certain strange things to our ears
(Acts. 17:20

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine ; but after
their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears ;
(2 Tim. 4:3

turn away their ears from the truth
(2 Tim. 4:4

entered into the ears of the Lord
(James. 5:4

But such as follows which are given in the ordinary dictionary are
missing.

to be all ears
to prick up one's ears
to lend one's ears to
to blush to the ears
to gain a person's ear
to have long ears

Here is a good place to mention about a feature expressed in the
above quotations. I think nobody can look over the tautology in
the expressions like 'to see with their eyes' and 'to hear with
your ears'. We can do without the prepositional phrases. What
is the use of them? I have a feeling that this redundancy has a

reason of existence of its own, for, in reading or hearing these redundant phrases, we can take enough time, filling up the gaps in the stream of thought or the advance of the story.

3. HAND

In spite of the vast quantity of 264 instances, the phrases consisting of the word 'hand' are very easy to our understanding. Those worthy of special quoting are as follows:

He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.

(Mat. 26:23)

But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doest:

(Mat. 6:3)

he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left

(Mat. 25:33)

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me

(Mat. 25:41)

if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off

(Mat. 5:30)

behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee

(Acts. 13:11)

for they wash not their hands when

(Mat. 15:2)

strike him with the palms of their hands

(Mark. 14:65)

he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.

(John. 20:20)

and the hand of the Lord was with him.

(Luke. 1:66)

To quote from among the many which have something of figurative meaning:

when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.

(Acts. 6:6)

grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, by stretching forth thine hand to heal.

(Acts. 4:30)

These gestures here signify ordination or mercy.

As for the prepositional phrases, there is nothing particular to speak of.

the time of my departure is at hand.

(2 Tim. 4:6

he went in and took her by the hand.

(Mast. 9:25

and hath given all things into his hand.

(John. 3:35

but he escaped out of their hand.

(John. 10:39

Such common combinations of 'hand' with certain verbs as follows are frequently found in the New Testament:

to give a helping hand

to put one's hand in

to fall into the hand of

to be under the hand of.

4. HEAD

There are 73 instances employing the word 'head'. Those with religious associations are:

Neither shalt thou swear by the head

(Mat. 5:36

when thou fastest, anoint thine head

(Mat. 6:17

hairs of your head are all numbered

(Mat. 10:30

ointment, and poured it on his head

(Mat. 26:7

of thorns, they put it upon his head

(Mat. 27:29

the reed, and smote him on the head

(Mat. 27:30

wipe them with the hairs of her head

(Luke. 7:44

shall not an hair of your head perish

(Luke. 21:18

for this is for your health: for there shall not a hair fall from the head of any of you

(Acts. 27:34

shalt heap coals of fire on his head

(Romans. 12:20

But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the

head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoreth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoreth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. --- For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. --- For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels.

(1 Cor. 11:3-10)

and a rainbow was upon his head

(Rev. 10:3)

having on his head a golden crown

(Rev. 14:14)

hath the seven heads and ten horns

(Rev. 17:9)

they cast dust on their heads and cried

(Rev. 18:19)

Your blood be upon your own heads

(Acts. 18:6)

As can easily be seen from the above quotations, the word 'head' in contrast with the other features, is employed so skillfully as to signify its figurative and spiritual meanig. This is especially true in 'Revelation'. How about the other secular phrases?

hath not where to lay his head

(Mat. 8:20)

is become the head of the corner

(Met. 21:42)

And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church.

(Ephesians. 1:22)

And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads

(Mat. 27:39)

looked up, and lift up your heads

(Luke. 21:28)

that they may shave their heads

(Acts. 21:24)

The familiar phrases current in present-day English are:

Two heads are better than one.

to quarrel about a pin's head

to be clear in the head

always go to the fountain head

to put the idea into some one's head

to take into one's head
 from head to foot
 to put one's head into the lion's mouth
 to knock one's head against a brick-wall
 to lose one's head.

These are, unlike the phrases in the New testament, quite advanced and refined in their psychological associations.

5. MOUTH

We have 75 instances where the word 'mouth' is employed. Those which have religious associations are:

proceedeth out of the mouth of God
 (Mat. 4:4)

spake by the mouth of his holy prophets
 (Luke. 1:70)

But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.
 (Mat. 18:16)

And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth,
 (2 Thessalonians. 2:8)

The phrases using the word 'mouth' are very poor in variety. Even when they are provided with contextual aid, they seldom bring about any particular suggestions or associations. All the few structural varieties are as follows:

Then Peter opened his mouth
 (Acts. 10:34)

nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth.
 (Acts. 11:8)

that every mouth may be stopped
 (Romans. 3:19)

it was in my mouth as sweet as honey
 (Rev. 10:10)

6. NOSE

It is strange enough that in the New Testament there is no phrase employing the word 'nose', while even in the Old Testament there are quite a few phrases which attract our attention.

he that hath a flat nose

(Lev. 21:18

I will put my hook in thy nose

(2 Kings. 19:28

Surely the churning of milk bringeth forth butter, and the wringing of the nose bringeth forth blood: so the forcing of wrath bringeth forth strife.

(Prov. 30:33

These are a smoke in thy nose

(Isa. 65:5

they put the branch to their nose

(Eze. 8:17

they shall take away thy nose

(Eze. 23:25

These quotations from the Old Testament serve just to show us the life the Hebrew lived. Here, by the way, it is worth while to mention the fact that the Bible does not favor the 'nose', though in the modern colloquial speech the nose is very instrumental to show our emotions. This disfavor of the 'nose' will be partly due to the very nature of the theme the Bible deals with.

7. FACE

In the New Testament we find 55 phrases of the 'face' and in the Old Testament 412. Unlike the other phrases we have considered above, the phrases consisting of the word 'face' have no great difference in usage from those in present-day English. All the instances that seem to have something of the Biblical association are:

For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.

(1 Peter. 3:12

Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast.

(Mat. 6:16

The rest of them are in literal meaning excepting the two instances which are used in metaphor, such as:

discern the face of the sky

(Mat. 16:3

dwell on the face of the whole earth.

(Luke. 21:35

In the New Testament, however, we can find no expressions of familiar tone like:

to have the face to
 to draw a long face
 on the face of it
 to face a thing out
 to fly in the face of
 to show one's face
 to save one's face.

CONCLUSION

Our original intention in this essay was to make the list of the phrases which indicate some gestures or actions. What has made the present writer direct his attention to this subject is that we are so often surprised with the similarity of association which certain human gestures always call up in our minds, regardless of the difference in time, place and race.

Now having gone through all the instances in the New Testament, we may say the title is misleading, for some of the quotations are mere descriptions of physical conditions, the others refer to nothing but bare actions. But as far as the New Testament is concerned, admitting the above defect in the method, it is certain that, in accordance with the 'great plainness of the Bible', the phrases under consideration are also very simple in structure as well as in locution. Classifying them in two, the religious and non-religious, we can say that this simplicity is especially remarkable in the latter group. There are no such polished and literary expressions as those in modern use. But it does not follow that they are ineffective in giving us the picture of what is going on in our minds. But because of the universality of emotion that certain gestures and actions raise, the phrases expressing gestures can be taken for one of the main factors in Biblical style. Evidently in the New Testament there are instances of metaphor and synecdoche as well as what is called steno-language (Ph. Wheelwright: *The Burning Fountain*, A study in the language of symbolism). But what is most characteristic is that the phrases in question are, sometimes pleonastic, very

appealing to us by the aid of context. As it has been mentioned before, their structural examination shows the poorness in variety of the phrases. They do without adjectives. And still they express more than wordiness and depth-language.

Finally we may add another point that, since their variety in meaning is so poor, the New Testament may not actually have served much to enlarge the size of individual vocabulary concerning gestures. This is quite contrary to our presumption. In other words, it may be concluded that the New Testament does not afford enough room for the vivid and expressive 'bodily idioms' (L. P. Smith. *Words and Idioms*, p. 279) and that their proper field of activity is in colloquial language.